

December 8, 2006

This past summer, I met with the entire Department (here at DOE HQ and via video-link with field offices) to convey my thoughts about the major challenges and opportunities that this great Department faces. In reflecting on that speech recently – and our collective progress since then – I thought it might be useful to communicate directly on a more frequent basis. So, this “Message from the Secretary” is the first of what I intend to be periodic messages to DOE employees. To make this dialogue truly meaningful, I remind you that you can email me at The.Secretary@hq.doe.gov at any time with thoughts and ideas. I look forward to upcoming opportunities to share my thoughts with you and to hear about issues that are on your minds.

Next week, I will travel to Japan, Korea, and China. While in China, I will join U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson as part of a delegation to Beijing for the inaugural meeting of the U.S. – China Strategic Economic Dialogue and the Five-Party Energy Ministerial with China, Japan, Korea, and India. Also participating from the U.S. are Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, Labor Secretary Elaine Chao, Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt, U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab, EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson, and other Administration officials including Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke.

This dialogue was launched by Presidents Bush and Hu in September as an overarching forum for discussing ways the U.S. and China can work together to ensure that citizens in both countries benefit fairly from our growing bilateral economic relationships. In Beijing, we will participate in a number of meetings with Vice Premier Wu Yi and other Chinese counterparts to discuss a range of issues including assuring continued global growth, China's economic development and further integration into the world trading system, stable energy markets, and cooperation on the environment. The U.S. delegation will also meet with Chinese President Hu and Premier Wen.

Department of Energy Strategic Plan

The Department has just released its Strategic Plan, and while such documents are frequently unreadable tomes, this one isn't like that at all — it's brief, clear, and useful. I hope you have a chance to review it, because I believe that it clearly outlines our mission, operating principles, and strategic themes. It is available at:
<http://www.energy.gov/about/strategicplan.htm>

The Plan serves as a helpful reminder that even with political changes in Washington, our mission at the Department of Energy remains the same: we will continue to work toward the discovery of solutions to meet America's energy needs through reliable, clean, and affordable sources of power; secure America's nuclear deterrent; strengthen the U.S.'s economic competitiveness and improve our quality of life through scientific innovations; protect the environment; and strengthen the operations and management of the Department. And, in all we do, continue to serve the President, the Congress, and the American people efficiently, effectively, and safely.

The Strategic Plan also spells out our operating principles. To me, this is the most valuable part of the plan. The principles are simple and direct. I list them here, because sometimes it is the simple things that we overlook in the day-to-day rush to meet deadlines and achieve our goals:

1. Ensure safe, secure, and environmentally responsible operations
2. Act with a sense of urgency
3. Work together
4. Treat people with dignity and respect
5. Make the tough choices
6. Keep our commitments
7. Embrace innovation
8. Always tell the truth
9. Do the right thing

We should apply these principles to all we do, as they are always relevant. A good working environment, where people genuinely respect and care about each other, is an environment where excellence is achieved.

Deferral of Performance Based Awards

I am sure that the issue of deferred performance based awards is on many minds. As you are aware, the Department is operating under the terms of a continuing resolution and that has created uncertainty over funding levels. While the budget request sent to Congress by the President early in 2006 provided for payment of performance-based awards, actual funding levels for FY 2007 remain uncertain.

My decision to delay the awards for all Federal employees across the entire Department was a difficult one, and I regret any difficulties this decision may have caused. However, until we are able to determine that the Department's FY 2007 budget has been sufficiently resolved, the Department's senior leadership recommended that it would not be prudent to pay awards that could, in the very near term, place the jobs of co-workers at risk. This deferral applies to all Department employees and includes discretionary pay adjustments as well. We hope that the delay will not be lengthy, that our funding levels will be determined quickly, and that awards and adjustments can be paid in the near future. We will continue to work with Congress to resolve our budget issues and keep you informed of Congressional action that clarifies our FY 2007 funding levels.

A copy of the DOECAST that outlines these issues is available at:

<http://www.oro.doe.gov/pmab/Announcements/FY2007/Deferral%20of%20Performance%20Based%20Awards%20and%20Discretionary%20Pay%20Adjustments.pdf>

Happy Holidays

It's hard to believe that the holiday season is officially upon us! I enjoyed visiting with many of you yesterday at the Forrestal holiday party. I hope the weeks ahead offer a time to relax, to be with your loved ones, and to reflect on the values that unite us all.

At this time of year, our thoughts naturally turn to the brave men and women who will not be able to be home this year – the members of our military serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the world. And, of course, we remember those who have lost their lives and the families and communities who grieve for them. Many have sacrificed much. But they have done so on behalf of one simple and fundamental idea: freedom. We owe them a great deal, and they will be in my thoughts and prayers.

I wish you all a happy, healthy holiday season and a prosperous New Year. I am very proud of what we have accomplished together this year, and I look forward to working with you in 2007.